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## Information and Communication and Technologies Task Force

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the fourth annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, as requested in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2001/7) prepared as a follow-up to Council resolution 2000/29.

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# Fourth annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

*Summary*

In its fourth year, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, through its core activities, working groups and regional nodes, made a substantive contribution to the preparations for the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society by sponsoring several regional meetings, organizing a series of global forums, producing several publications and participating actively in events organized by other stakeholders, organized three high-level round tables linking information and communication technology (ICT) with science and technology and the Millennium Development Goals, and provided substantial input to the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development through the working group on ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping. While the mandate of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force expired at the end of 2005, the task of harnessing the potential of ICT for advancing development is not finished. The global alliance for ICT and development was recently approved by the Secretary-General, and its mission will be to facilitate and promote further integration of ICT with development activities, thus contributing to linking the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society with the broader United Nations development agenda.

The alliance will build on and advance the work of past initiatives such as the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force as well as the experience of the World Summit on the Information Society process in addressing core issues related to the role of information and communication technology in economic development and eradication of poverty and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

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# I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to the mandate contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/29 of 28 July 2000 and its decision 2001/210 of 13 March 2001 on the establishment of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force.

2. The report covers the activities of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force for the period from March to December 2005, when its mandate concluded. It provides an overview of the current environment, describes the role of the Task Force in promoting access to and application of information and communication technology for advancing the United Nations development goals and presents an outline of the major activities of the Task Force, an assessment of its effectiveness and a look into the future of ICT for development.

# II. Current environment

3. The year 2005 will be remembered as a milestone for the international development community. The 2005 World Summit was followed closely by the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. The former drew the attention of the world community to the significant work still needed to meet international development goals by 2015; the latter to the powerful enabling and facilitating potential of ICT to scale up activities to transform the Millennium Development Goals into achievements.

4. While the 2005 World Summit confirmed that some degree of progress was being made towards the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration (see resolution 55/2), the call to overcome a business as usual attitude and actively adopt more innovative efforts and approaches reverberated throughout the development community.

5. The 19,000 people who attended the World Summit on the Information Society two months later hailed the concerted application of ICT — in its various forms, including computers, handheld devices, wired and wireless telephones, even radios and televisions — as a vital ingredient in humanity's ability to address development challenges, including poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.

6. These momentous Summits took place at a time when the external environment was relatively favourable to promoting social and economic development. Although terrorism, security, high oil prices and regional and national strife posed many challenges to Governments, markets and citizens alike, macroeconomic and political situations were largely stable. Some development-oriented processes, such as the Kyoto Protocol talks and the Doha trade negotiation process, may have failed to bring tangible progress in areas such as environmental sustainability and international trade, but in the field of ICT for development there is cause for optimism.

7. While the digital divide has a long way to go before it is bridged, over the past 25 years there has been a positive movement to connect the previously unconnected. There has been a significant increase in the number of individuals with access to telephones, with developing countries accounting for more than 60 per cent of the

world's telephone lines in 2005, most of the growth coming from mobile telephones, which now outnumber fixed ones. Even poor households have been able to benefit from telephone access through prepaid services and calling cards.

8. Furthermore, estimates indicate that worldwide Internet use more than quadrupled between 2000 and 2005. A significant proportion of this increase can be credited to new wireless technology and associated business models that have increased competition and accelerated the development of broadband infrastructure in rich and poor countries alike and have helped, in particular, to begin to connect the urban poor and rural communities with affordable yet commercially viable services.

9. Other forms of technology have contributed to higher levels of access and usage. Among many examples, computing power continues to increase thanks to a novel approach to microchip architecture. Devices continue to become smaller and integrate more functions while becoming more affordable. Powerful Internet search engines have succeeded in making the World Wide Web's vast repository of information and destinations manageable. Broadband capacity increases significantly the versatility and utility of Internet connections.

10. Despite progress in the diffusion of ICT and innovations in technology and services, gaps in access to ICT remain large. Inequality persists both among and within countries. Effective policymaking to redress these disparities is, in many cases, hampered by the limited availability of current data for most developing countries. Many Governments lack adequate tools to monitor, evaluate and guide investments in ICT and connectivity in underserved areas. While the need for measurable, comparable indicators to track progress and benchmark performance in building an information society has been recognized, agreement remains to be reached on which data should be compiled and benchmarked internationally and which organizations should be responsible for various indicators, such as on access, quality, affordability, efficiency and sustainability.

11. Due to the successful advocacy of the World Summit on the Information Society process and the information and communication technology for development community, it is increasingly accepted that when applied strategically ICT has the potential to increase growth in businesses of any size and in countries at any stage of development, thereby creating new sources of income and employment for the poor. ICT can reduce poverty by making a country's economy more efficient and globally competitive. In addition to reducing income inequality, such technology has the potential to improve health and education services, enhance social inclusion and promote more efficient, accountable, democratic government, especially when combined with freedom of information and expression.

12. This distinctive role in supporting sustainable poverty reduction is increasingly being recognized by the world's policymakers. A consensus is forming that it is crucial that ICT should move closer to the mainstream of development economics and policies, nationally, regionally and globally. However, movement in this respect has been slow. Among the biggest challenges to the integration and diffusion of ICT facing developing countries are insufficient policy and implementation capacity, opposition from vested interests and persistent obstacles to the adoption of ICT, such as slow, unreliable and expensive telecommunication services, limited incentives to change business models and operating structures, lack of trust and legal impediments.

13. It is understood that Governments have primary responsibility for the welfare of their citizens and must provide an enabling economic, political and social environment and, in particular, design and implement e-strategies to guide national development. Other stakeholders, however, have distinct responsibilities of equal importance to ensure that the benefits of ICT reach all women, men and children. As is reiterated throughout the World Summit on the Information Society documents, only through the international cooperation of Governments and the partnership of all stakeholders, will it be possible to succeed in our challenge of harnessing the potential of ICT as a tool, at the service of development, to promote the use of information and knowledge to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to address the national and local development priorities, thereby further improving the socio-economic development of all human beings.[2]

## III. Role of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

14. Since its launch in 2001, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force has employed a multi-stakeholder model to promote digital opportunities, in particular in the developing world. Its mandate was to help forge a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, government, private industry, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. Rather than trying to carve out an institutional niche, its members, regional networks and thematic working groups cooperated with other institutions, networks and initiatives to leverage financial and technical resources to create opportunities for more of the world's citizens, work collectively to broaden understanding with respect to what ICT can do to improve quality of life and stimulate tangible applications of such technology to development challenges. As the Task Force was maturing so, too, was the ICT development community, which coalesced around the two-phased World Summit on the Information Society process and has since made inroads into the broader development community.

15. The Task Force was not an operational, implementing or funding agency. Because of its inclusiveness, legitimacy and convening power, the Task Force was a unique body that provided a supportive venue for cross-sectoral dialogue on international norms and practices, advocacy, policy coherence and coordination, and performed a critical guiding role in advancing development initiatives. Through strong campaigning, the Task Force contributed successfully to linking ICT and the development agendas at the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on the Information Society and the 2005 World Summit and in streams of regional activity within and outside of the United Nations system. It spearheaded the discussion on how ICT can be leveraged to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. Besides sustaining and strengthening substantive debate on issues related to information and communication technology for development within the context of the World Summit on the Information Society and the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, the Task Force facilitated debate on the preparation of action-oriented strategies and policies.

16. In its four years, the Task Force consistently advocated the enabling and catalytic roles that ICT can play across the broad United Nations development

agenda. The Task Force showcased how ICT can have both direct effects — by expanding the reach, scope and impact of social development programmes, health services, education and training programmes and citizen participation — and an indirect impact — by, among other things, creating new economic opportunities that help lift individuals, communities and nations out of poverty.

17. Having worked in parallel with the World Summit on the Information Society process since its inception, the Task Force has made a tangible contribution to it. It organized a number of global forums and high-level round tables on key substantive issues, including Internet governance and financing of information and communication technology for development; brought together its members with other international development and ICT experts, policymakers and leading private sector and civil society representatives to push forward the information and communication technology for development agenda; and provided a platform for sharing experiences, exchanging views and identifying untapped opportunities, successful pilot projects and innovative development approaches. During the Geneva and Tunis phases of the Summit, the Task Force held several parallel events and participated in the information and communication technology for development platform and information and communication technology for all exhibition. Through its regional networks in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States and Europe and Central Asia, the Task Force organized events around the developing world in order to bring regional perspectives to the World Summit on the Information Society and build capacity to help developing country representatives participate more effectively. Likewise, the Task Force's thematic working groups on ICT policy and governance, enabling environment, human resources development and capacity-building and ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping provided venues for practitioners, academics, donors and recipients to interact online and in person in support of the World Summit on the Information Society objectives.

18. Throughout its mandate, the Task Force also supported a number of successful initiatives independent of, but complementary to, the World Summit on the Information Society process that were implemented with various partner organizations, including the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), the World Bank, regional development banks and several other organizations and initiatives. The Task Force has also collaborated closely with private sector partners, including Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Nokia and Siemens.

## IV. Activities and accomplishments

19. Although its founding predated the World Summit on the Information Society process, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force opted to align its work in a complementary manner in recognition of the Summit's potential to channel worldwide efforts on achieving the vision of the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society described in the Declaration of Principles adopted at the Geneva phase of the Summit, as well as attaining the development goals enumerated by United Nations conferences and summits held during the 1990s and captured in the Millennium Declaration.

20. In 2005, the work of the Task Force continued to facilitate the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society by fostering an international dialogue on key issues through meetings, forums and round-table discussions; contributing to the preparation, execution, follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society; spreading knowledge and generating synergies through its publication series; and building on and strengthening its other initiatives, including the support of global networks and partnerships on information and communication technology for development and collaboration with Governments, the private sector, civil society and United Nations agencies to effectively apply ICT to development challenges.

## A. Meetings of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

21. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force convened three meetings in 2005: in April in Dublin, October in Geneva and November in Tunis.

22. A global forum on a multi-stakeholder approach to harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies for education was held in Dublin on 13 and 14 April 2005,[3] in conjunction with the eighth meeting of the Task Force, and was hosted by the Government of Ireland in collaboration with the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, a spin-off of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force. The Forum attracted the participation of over 300 representatives, including ministers and other high-level Government officials, prominent educators and representatives of civil society, the private sector, academia and youth.

23. The Forum permitted a genuine dialogue focusing on opportunities to achieve a reduction of poverty and enhance development, by promoting the cognitive, creative and technological skills necessary to master digital technology in productive ways and by using technology to enhance learning experiences and overcome resource constraints and other barriers that prevent students from acquiring an education. Youth representatives stressed the need for youth inclusion in policymaking and underlined the importance of intergenerational dialogue. The roles of both ICT and education in increasing the likelihood for success in attaining the Goals by 2015 were highlighted.

24. The publication *Harnessing the Potential of ICT for Education: A Multistakeholder Approach — Proceedings of the Dublin Global Forum of the United Nations ICT Task Force*[4] captures innovative ideas and initiatives on the use of ICT in strengthening education and highlights the roles of all relevant stakeholders. It also features case studies of ICT-based projects at the grass-roots level and efforts to create national infrastructures that make use of new technology to improve teaching and learning habits. The publication was a product of collaboration between the Task Force and the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative.

25. The closed session of the eighth meeting of the Task Force was held on 15 April.[5] The Task Force discussed its contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society and its activities related to the 2005 World Summit, reviewed the budget and debated the global alliance proposal (see para. 83). The session was preceded by meetings of the working groups on ICT policy and governance,

enabling environment, human development and capacity-building and ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goal mapping.

26. The ninth meeting of the Task Force, hosted by the International Labour Organization, was held on 1 October 2005 in Geneva, immediately following the conclusion of the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.[6] Members discussed the results of the 13 September 2005 round table on innovation and investment: scaling science and technology to meet the Millennium Development Goals (see para. 29), the outcome of the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Summit, the Task Force's contributions to the Tunis phase and the global alliance proposal in light of developments since the Dublin Task Force meeting.

27. The tenth meeting of the Task Force was held in Tunis on 18 November 2005, in conjunction with the World Summit on the Information Society. The Chairman of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force reflected on its work and achievements and outlined the outcome of the Tunis phase of the Summit as it relates to the work of the United Nations in the information and communication technology for development arena. Members evaluated the activities of the Task Force, the status of the global alliance proposal and the implications of the creation of the Internet Governance Forum pursuant to the World Summit on the Information Society Tunis Agenda. Speakers praised the valuable work done by the Task Force, expressed appreciation to the staff of the Task Force secretariat, underscored the importance of strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement and expressed hope that the global alliance would continue the important work in information and communication technology for development.

## B. Science, technology and innovation round-table series

28. With the 2005 World Summit and the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society both occurring in the latter half of 2005, the Task Force leveraged the unique opportunity to further strengthen the linkages between ICT and the internationally agreed development goals and to strategically align the outcomes of these two events, including by organizing three high-level round tables.

29. The round table on science, technology and innovation, including ICT, to meet the Millennium Development Goals, organized in partnership with AIT Global, was held on 30 June 2005 in New York and attended by representatives of numerous Member States, the United Nations system, the private sector and civil society. The round table on innovation and investment: scaling science and technology to meet the Millennium Development Goals was held on the eve of the 2005 Millennium Summit on 13 September 2005 at Headquarters.[7] This event was organized by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and the United Nations Millennium Project in association with UNFIP and was hosted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Heads of State or Government from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan and Senegal and dozens of leading information and communication technology for development experts, prominent members of the private sector and civil society and executive heads from the United Nations spoke. The round table on putting information and communication technologies to work for the United Nations development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, an official parallel event of the World Summit on

the Information Society held on 17 November 2005 in Tunis, was organized by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force in association with UNFIP and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and featured high-level representatives from government, industry, academia and the United Nations system, who focused mainly on Africa's unique challenges and opportunities.

30. The round tables launched a new phase of efforts aimed at marshalling multi-stakeholder contributions in science, technology, innovation and information and communication technology for development and finding ways for global partnerships to continue to advance progress on the United Nations development agenda. The free-flowing, moderated format facilitated interactive discussion.

31. Several key messages emerged as scientists, development experts, policymakers, business executives and ICT experts came together to share observations and ideas. The round tables reiterated how science-based technological advance is the long-term driving force of development and economic growth, and affirmed that building scientific capacity and investing in technological opportunities should be integral parts of national development strategies. Scaling up of development activities through ICT in health, education, economic growth and the environment might require providing evidence to policymakers that successful ICT-based initiatives can bring about a broader impact and new levels of reach and effectiveness in developing countries.

32. National Governments must take the lead and work to produce a favourable environment by supporting infrastructure development, integrating science and technology into national curricula, promoting national research systems, supporting innovation and enterprise and mainstreaming information and communication technology for development. Leaders must mobilize resources and commitment from all sectors and actively engage all segments of society in order to achieve the common goals of development.

33. Participants underscored the pivotal role of the private sector as a source of new initiatives and investments in ICT. They encouraged Governments to instil a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within higher education systems in developed and developing countries. Some speakers highlighted the need to increase the participation of women and girls in science, technology and innovation and to find local solutions and foster regional cooperation.

## C. Input to the World Summit on the Information Society preparatory process

34. The World Summit on the Information Society developed into a unique opportunity for world leaders to agree to shape the future information society in which the potential of the ICT revolution is harnessed for the advancement of development.

35. In 2004 and 2005, the Task Force made a substantive contribution to the preparations for the Tunis phase of the Summit, sponsoring several regional meetings, organizing a series of global forums and participating actively in events organized by other stakeholders. It also tapped its extensive network to involve

other stakeholders from the private sector and civil society in the preparatory process.

36. At the regional level, the Task Force partnered with the Economic Commission for Africa and others to support broad participation in the Africa regional preparatory conference in Accra in February 2005. Members also actively participated in the regional preparatory ministerial conference for Latin America and the Caribbean in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2005. Through the plan of action for the information society in Latin America and the Caribbean, participants identified a set of goals and specific actions they committed themselves to achieving by 2007, in order to foster digital inclusion in the region, thereby providing a benchmark against which to measure progress in attaining the Summit's objectives.

## D. Contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society

37. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society Tunis meeting included a presence in the exhibition, a number of substantive side events and the launch of several policy publications. Many Task Force members were featured prominently throughout the event hosting activities, delivering statements to the plenary, expanding and strengthening their networks and finding new venues for collaboration.

### 1. Exhibition at the information and communication technology for all event

38. The Task Force's exhibition included information on all its activities and served as a distribution point for its publications. The Task Force pavilion also showcased the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, the Fundación Cisneros initiative for televised education in Latin America, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey on ICT and parliaments, a project of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs portal for accessing resources on gender issues on the Internet ("WomenWatch", http://www.un.org/womenwatch/) founded by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

### 2. Official side events

39. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force organized parallel events during the Summit. These events showcased a wide range of ICT-related issues and provided a platform for discussion among stakeholders. They presented opportunities to bring together long-time collaborators and engage new actors in the work of the Task Force (see para. 29).

#### Measuring the information society

40. The event on measuring the information society brought together ICT stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels to highlight the importance of quantitative analysis for ICT policymaking and development in areas such as education, government and health to illustrate the contribution of ICT measurement to the follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society, and to present a set of core statistical indicators agreed by key international agencies working in the field. The event was organized by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which involves 11 organizations: the Information and

Communication Technologies Task Force, UNCTAD, Eurostat, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the World Bank. The Partnership aims to promote the advancement of comparable ICT data at the global level and to assist developing countries in the collection of ICT statistics.

**Governance, global citizenship and technology**

41. The high-level dialogue on governance, global citizenship and technology: the role of parliaments in the information society, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, provided the opportunity to present the audience with key parliament leaders' views and crucial initiatives on the role that national and regional assemblies can play in building the information society.[x] The event provided the platform to launch the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament, an alliance of national and regional assemblies, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international organizations, media, corporations and civil society that seeks to contribute to the empowerment of legislatures by reinforcing the capacity of parliaments to harness ICT tools and place them at the service of the institutional process, citizens' access to parliamentary activities and inter-parliamentary cooperation.

**Choosing the right technologies for education**

42. In the workshop "Choosing the right technologies for education", the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative presented its total cost of ownership calculator, an online tool for policymakers and practitioners to understand and estimate the costs and benefits of various technology options for ICT in education.[y] The calculator is part of a project whose goals are to provide decision makers and educators, in both developed and developing countries, with accessible tools for understanding the value of investments in technology for education, for understanding the relative strengths and feasibility of different technology options and for taking local country conditions into account in the decision-making process.

**Women in the information society**

43. Addressing the lessons learned and experiences gained by each region in its gender-mainstreaming efforts, the round table on women in the information society: building a gender-balanced, knowledge-based economy organized by the regional commissions, UNCTAD and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, recognized the need to sensitize policymakers to the need to build an inclusive information society, promoting the full and active participation of women and men. The panel observed that gender issues were not adequately addressed in the Tunis Agenda and suggested directions for further action to empower women and increase their access to ICT. Youth education, culturally sensitive policies and poor and rural areas were particularly identified as areas of focus, where women's empowerment and increased access to ICT could help reduce gender imbalance. The panel also called for gender-sensitization training of policymakers to ensure better

policies, implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society Plan of Action and gender mainstreaming, with a view to achieving the larger goals of equity and equality.

**Building regional partnerships for the information society**

44. The regional commissions and UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, organized a high-level round table on building regional partnerships for the information society: regional perspectives and global dimensions, chaired by the President of Rwanda, to show how the goals of sustainable, inclusive development in the regions can be supported by innovative technologies. Led by a high-level panel of Government, private sector and international organization representatives, the round table highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and strengthened public-private partnerships in developing sustainable information strategies. The round table stressed that, as a prerequisite to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, access to ICT is a necessity and not a choice for developing countries. Recognizing the challenges they face in harnessing ICT to promote the development agenda, the regional commissions showcased successful initiatives that could be replicated in other areas.

**Achieving better quality and cost efficiency in health care and education through information and communication technology**

45. The panel discussion on achieving better quality and cost efficiency in health care and education through ICT, co-organized by Siemens and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, aimed to raise awareness of the potential of ICT to improve the quality and cost efficiency of vital public services, with a specific focus on education and health care. Panellists presented several concrete, replicable projects with quantifiable results and delivered some visionary statements.

**Bridging the digital divide with broadband wireless Internet**

46. In the framework of their partnership to promote the adoption of broadband wireless Internet in municipalities and underserved communities around the world, the Wireless Internet Institute and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force organized a round table to explore the critical role that broadband wireless infrastructure deployments play in bridging the digital divide. The round table, based on the work undertaken over the last two years by the Institute in cooperation with the Task Force (see para. 54), identified best regulatory practices in establishing affordable service, early broad deployment case studies and lessons learned.

### 3. New publications presented at the World Summit on the Information Society

47. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force presented seven new publications during the Tunis event.

*The World Summit on the Information Society: Moving from the Past into the Future*

48. This publication is a collection of more than 50 diverse perspectives from key players who participated in the making of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan

of Action, adopted during the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003.[10]

49. The book analyses the Summit process from the perspective of intergovernmental organizations, Governments, the private sector and civil society, goes through the substantive issues of the Summit, such as history and theory, development, financing and capacity-building, human rights, media freedoms, cultural diversity, intellectual property and Internet governance, and looks into the future, towards the Tunis Summit and beyond.

**Village Phone Replication Manual**

50. The Manual was published in collaboration with Grameen Foundation USA and the World Bank.[11] It addresses the challenges of extending communication networks to rural areas in developing countries and serves as a guideline for replicating in other countries the village phone programme of Bangladesh, one of the most visible success stories in international development. This publication provides a template for creating sustainable initiatives that simultaneously bring telecommunications to the rural poor, create viable new business for micro-entrepreneurs and expand the customer base of telecommunication companies in a profitable way.

*Information and Communication Technology for Peace: The Role of ICT in Preventing, Responding to and Recovering from Conflict*

51. This report was published in collaboration with the Government of Switzerland and is an introduction to the ICT for Peace Project.[12] It is a preliminary attempt to address ways in which ICT can be used to defuse situations leading to conflict, manage peace operations, respond to the consequences of conflict and promote stabilization of post-conflict situations.

52. The first part of the report reviews the origin of ICT for peace in the World Summit on the Information Society and the role that ICT might play in the broader field of conflict management. The second part showcases many examples of how ICT is being used before, during and after conflicts. This publication highlights both the challenges and opportunities for development in ICT for peace, with the aim of raising awareness and building coherence in this important nascent sphere of activity.

*Reforming Internet Governance: Perspectives from the Working Group on Internet Governance*

53. At the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, Governments adopted a Plan of Action that called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to set up a Working Group on Internet Governance, to which 40 individuals from governments, the private sector and civil society were appointed. This publication is a collection of papers by former members of the Working Group and its secretariat that were written following the release of the Working Group's report in July 2005.[13] The contributors offer their personal reflections on the value of multi-stakeholder cooperation in the Working Group and beyond, and on key substantive issues and institutional reform proposals currently under consideration by the world community.

*The Promise of Broadband Wireless Communities*

54. This publication, in its second edition, captures and summarizes the work that the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and the Wireless Internet Institute have been conducting since 2002 on the critical role that broadband wireless infrastructure deployment plays in bridging the digital divide.[14]

55. Led by the Institute and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, and with the financial support of more than 30 private sector organizations, the programme was conducted through a set of meetings and publications designed to raise awareness, build consensus, share best practices, train regulators and explore sustainable business models. It has triggered several landmark initiatives, including the acceleration of liberalization of unlicensed spectrum policy in South Africa, the Wireless Corridor in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Wireless Philadelphia and the statewide deployment of a broadband wireless infrastructure in the rural state of Jigawa in Nigeria.

56. The book attempts to clarify the key issues in wireless Internet technology that need attention on the part of Governments, international development agencies and non-governmental organizations in many challenges associated with legacy regulations, administrative obstacles and the opposition of incumbent telecommunication operators.

*Open Access for Africa — Challenges, Recommendations and Examples*

57. This publication builds on the workshop[15] on open Access held in Maputo on 10 and 11 May 2005, which was organized by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force Working Group on the Enabling Environment in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Eduardo Mondlane University and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. The main themes of the workshop were open access solutions, a pan-African optical fibre backbone, financing models and regulatory environment for open-access technology. The 150 participants from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America addressed open-access technology in the context of developing regions, in particular sub-Saharan Africa.

58. The publication[16] examines the different aspects of how to provide increased availability of ICT infrastructure and services for Africa, including identifying the appropriate actors, adopting the relevant technologies and putting in place appropriate regulatory frameworks, and how to support the entrepreneurship necessary to build sustainable ICT networks in Africa.

*WSIS and the Future of ICT*

59. This magazine, a contribution to the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, provides an introduction to the key issues of ICT, globalization and development and the complex undertaking of the World Summit on the Information Society and presents an overview of some of the challenges ahead. The contributions to the magazine reflect the successful multi-stakeholder approach of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, providing insights of representatives from Governments, academia, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.

## E. Contribution to the follow-up and implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society

60. Responsibility for the follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society is extremely broad, falling to all stakeholders. The United Nations has a pivotal role and a broad mandate in the follow-up and implementation of the Summit. While the mandate of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force expired at the end of 2005, work begun under its leadership will persist and contribute to realizing the World Summit on the Information Society vision and moving forward, as highlighted below.

61. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council has been mandated by the General Assembly to oversee the system-wide follow-up to the Geneva and Tunis outcomes and to review, at its substantive session in July 2006, the mandate, composition and agenda of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. As regards multi-stakeholder implementation, a comprehensive and coherent framework for system-wide follow up has been developed and endorsed by the High-level Committee on Programmes with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ITU and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system having responsibility to facilitate this work.

### 1. Development Account project on capacity-building for ICT policymaking

62. In 2005, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force worked to achieve synergy of its activities with those of the Development Account project on capacity-building for ICT policymaking being implemented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the regional commissions, UNDP and UNCTAD. The project aimed at raising awareness of, and building lasting capacities in, developing countries and countries with economies in transition on developing comprehensive and sustainable ICT for development policies and national strategies.

63. Funded under the fourth tranche of the United Nations Development Account, the project provides training, technical assistance and advisory services to decision makers and policymakers from developing countries. It builds on the ICT initiatives of the regional commissions and organizes a series of regional activities, including studies of the ICT strategies of developing countries, regional and online workshops and technical assistance in developing ICT policy and strategy to selected developing countries. Additionally, the project aims to establish a network of ICT actors and policymakers who will facilitate regional and international cooperation in the area of Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

64. The project also promotes systematic and effective participation of developing countries in international ICT agenda-setting by supporting the participation of policymakers from these countries in regional and international conferences and meetings on ICT policy.

### 2. Global alliance consultations

65. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Chairman of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force led a broad, year-and-a-half long consultation process among Task Force members and the larger ICT for

development community to gather stakeholders' views on the proposed establishment of a global alliance on ICT and development. The alliance would respond to the need for an inclusive global forum and platform for multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral policy dialogue, conducted in an open and transparent manner, on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

66. The Task Force took advantage of meetings organized by itself and its partners to gather stakeholder views. This process included regional events conducted by the Economic Commission for Africa, the Arab Regional Network and the Asia Regional Network; a gathering in Paris for the business sector hosted by the International Chamber of Commerce; and a consultation in Geneva for civil society and Governments. In addition, online consultations took place via the Task Force's website and mailing lists on an ongoing basis. The resulting principles and elements of the global alliance were progressively refined, based on the continuous feedback.

67. Building on the work begun by and the experiences learned from the Task Force and its predecessors, the global alliance promises to be the next generation Information and Communication Technologies for Development multi-stakeholder entity, equipped to leverage the strengths of its partners and collaborators to make attaining the internationally agreed development goals a reality (see para. 83).

## F. Other activities

68. Throughout 2005, the Task Force continued to support a number of activities initiated in previous years.

### 1. Contribution to the development of an information and communication technologies strategy for the United Nations system

69. In order to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities that ICT offers for system-wide knowledge creation and management, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force undertook a collaborative effort with the information technology managers network of the United Nations system, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/295, which mandated the development of a comprehensive ICT strategy for the United Nations system. Task Force members have participated in periodic meetings and have prepared a number of papers containing expert advice and recommendations. The process of formulating actions and deliverables continues.

### 2. The World Trade Organization, e-commerce and information technology

70. In 2005, in collaboration with the Markle Foundation, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force published a report on an entity with an important and under-recognized impact on the governance of information technology, the World Trade Organization, and its relationship to Internet governance.[17] Through its application of the rules-based trading system to e-commerce, the role of the Organization as a key player in information technology governance can be traced back to 1995 and has continued through the most recent Doha round of consultations. The report is a contribution to a wider discussion on an area of the work of the Organization that is of particular relevance to the future and to the Internet and aims to stimulate further understanding of the Organization's

role in Internet governance and lead to a more efficient, and ultimately more equitable, system of governance for existing and emerging technologies that will underpin and drive much of the global economy.

### 3. City informatization in the Asian and Pacific region

71. The fifth annual Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region was held on 30 May 2005 in Shanghai, China.[18] The Forum was initiated by the Shanghai Municipal People's Government and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and was co-sponsored by the Asia Regional Network of the Task Force, in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UNITAR, the State Council Informatization Office of China, the Ministry of Science and Technology of China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

72. The 2005 Forum was dedicated to the theme of ICT for development and provided opportunities for an in-depth discussion and a wide exchange of views on the challenges of bridging the digital divide within communities and on how to ensure access to the benefits of ICT for all citizens in the Asian and Pacific region. About 1,100 representatives from 44 countries attended the meeting, along with representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and a wide array of civil society organizations.

### 4. International Council for Caring Communities

73. In 2005, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force continued its multi-year partnership with the International Council for Caring Communities. Along with the United Nations Programme on Ageing, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Public Information and private sector partners, the Task Force co-sponsored a worldwide student design competition on ICT and ageing, organized by the International Council for Caring Communities, to stimulate research and design projects related to the mainstreaming of older persons in the knowledge society and to demonstrate the value of ICT in the context of an ageing population.

74. On 9 June 2005, the International Council for Caring Communities organized a conference on the theme of "promoting an enabling environment: music, technology, culture and health care" held at Headquarters. The conference was planned in collaboration with the programme on ageing of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine at New York University and the Global Music Healing Institute. Topics included ICT as an enabling tool for rural and urban delivery of health-care services, emerging technologies in music and medicine, the power of music in creating a dialogue among children and the impact of musical rhythms and their utilization as a medical tool.

## V. Assessment and the way forward: Information and Communication Technologies for Development and the United Nations development agenda

75. The achievements and challenges of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force over its four-year mandate were extensively discussed

during Task Force meetings and by its members, with a view to evaluating its impact and success in meeting its objectives and to provide an indication of how opportunities and threats present in the current environment might shape future endeavours and initiatives in Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

76. It was agreed that the Task Force had been successful in achieving its key objectives. It met a clear and widely recognized need for a truly global policy forum and platform for multi-stakeholder interaction and consensus-building on ways and means to harness the potential of ICT for servicing and advancing development.

77. The participation by Governments, civil society and private sector in Task Force activities has grown steadily and suggests that a base of concerned and engaged organizations has formed and responds to a concrete need. The special patronage of the Secretary-General, the direct link to the Economic and Social Council and other key United Nations agencies and bodies provided the Task Force with global visibility and, therefore, attracted high-level and expert participation from all stakeholders. The decentralized structure of thematic working groups and regional nodes achieved a broad geographical and institutional interaction and provided an impartial platform for the presentation of regional and subregional views, perspectives and concerns from all constituencies. There is general consensus that the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force was a real and fruitful step to expanding the reach, scope and impact on development by meaningfully engaging a variety of relevant stakeholders in an evenly balanced manner. Additionally, the diversity of views represented in the Task Force, as well as non-involvement in operational activities and funding, contributed to the perception of the Task Force as a neutral, honest broker.

78. Some of its achievements have been highlighted. The Task Force has been able to influence policy dialogue, both in intergovernmental forums and among various stakeholders and has enriched intergovernmental negotiations. The Task Force has had success in its activities to benchmark progress in the use of Information and Communication Technologies for Development by creating a non-confrontational, non-negotiating and open platform that promoted cross-sectoral dialogues on key policy concerns and issues. Tangible products that have emerged from the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force include a 12-book publication series on relevant Information and Communication Technologies for Development issues that have been key to meeting its objectives to raise awareness and build capacity among members of the development community, as well as policymakers and decision makers. Among the successes of the Task Force were: three well-attended thematic global forums; three high-level round tables linking ICT with science and technology and the Millennium Development Goals; a substantial input to the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development through the working group on ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping; and the successful spin-off of the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative. In this last year of its mandate, the Task Force continued to provide advice to the Secretary-General on the United Nations ICT strategy and on the effective integration of ICT into United Nations management and planning in the broader context of the 2005 World Summit and United Nations reform.

79. The Task Force has been successful in functioning in a cost-effective, flexible and relatively non-bureaucratic manner, with light secretariat support, by joining hands with a large number of interested partners in undertaking its activities.

80. Nevertheless, the impact and sustainability of the Task Force's initiatives and activities were, at times, constrained by several features of its make-up, procedures and practices, including its fixed, limited membership; inadequate representation and contribution by various stakeholder groups, including academia, women, youth, the disabled and others; lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities among different components of the Task Force (e.g. bureau, members, networks); absence of clear policies on members' responsibilities and differing expectations on levels of engagement; absence of uniform policies on the formation of partnerships; limited resources and narrow funding base; and lack of measurable objectives and regular evaluation.

81. Despite its limitations, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force proved the value of collaboration and cooperation.

82. Consultations conducted by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force revealed support for a follow-up, based on a broader multi-stakeholder platform with no operational functions that would build on the achievements and correct its shortcomings, capitalize on opportunities to advance the United Nations development agenda that have been presented by the conjunction of the 2005 World Summit and the World Summit on the Information Society and strengthen the multi-stakeholder approach to international policy formulation.

83. The wheels for such a follow-up are now turning. The launch of the global alliance for information and communication technologies and development was recently approved by the Secretary-General. The alliance will hold its inaugural meeting on 19 June in Kuala Lumpur, hosted by the Government of Malaysia. The alliance's mission will be to facilitate and promote integration of ICT with development activities and to be a platform for an open, inclusive, multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral policy dialogue on the issues. It will thus contribute to linking the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society with the broader United Nations development agenda. The alliance is intended to complement and support the existing institutions and networks, functioning as a multi-stakeholder platform independent of specific United Nations processes, including the World Summit on the Information Society, while at the same time maintaining a link to the United Nations under the patronage of the Secretary-General and the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The alliance will build on, and advance, the work of past initiatives, such as the Digital Opportunity Task Force and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, and the experience of the World Summit on the Information Society process.

84. Having been formed on the basis of the outcome of the extensive multi-stakeholder consultations conducted by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, the global alliance will function primarily as a decentralized network, open to participation of all stakeholders, including Governments, business, civil society and international organizations. The alliance will aim to expand the circle of participants in policy debate and partnership beyond the traditional set of stakeholders by actively engaging constituencies that currently are not adequately involved, particularly non-governmental participants from developing countries, media, academia, youth and women's groups.

85. The alliance will organize thematic events, addressing core issues related to the role of ICT in economic development and the eradication of poverty, employment and enterprise in pro-poor growth scenarios, with particular focus on health, education, gender, youth, the disabled and disadvantaged segments of society. Groups of participants would coalesce around specific topics of mutual interest put forward for discussion.

## VI. Conclusion

86. After the World Summit on the Information Society, a new stage of activity in Information Communication Technologies for Development is beginning. Indeed, there is discernible movement towards a convergence with so-called mainstream development, as it becomes evident that many of the internationally agreed development goals will not be met without a massive scaling-up of efforts. With its multiplier effects, ICT holds much untapped potential that can be leveraged. However, computer and telephone networks alone are not sufficient to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; that will require the deployment of human networks as well.

87. It is not a challenge that Governments can overcome alone; the private sector and civil society bring unique assets to the table. Intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, catalyse innovation, both by providing forums and frameworks within which these parties can work together to achieve common visions and by synthesizing best practices and lessons learned, using the knowledge of the larger system.

88. It is necessary to maintain the momentum generated within the development community in 2005 and broaden efforts to raise awareness, educate, build capacity and generate sustainable full-scale action not only to ensure that all the world's people have access to a telephone or the Internet but also to ensure that they, and succeeding generations, live healthier, better, more fulfilling lives.

*Notes*

[1] This section draws upon the research and conclusions included in Information and Communications for Development 2006: Global Trends and Policies, World Bank. Washington D.C., 2006, as well as contributions by Tadao Takahashi (Brazil), member of the Bureau of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force.

[2] WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev.1), para. 88.

[3] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1525.

[4] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1570.

[5] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=8tf.

[6] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=9tf.

[7] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=ms5.

[8] http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN021532.pdf.

[9] http://www.gesci.org/gesci/publisher/index.jsp?alID=89&nlID=116&plD=97.

[10] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1544.

[11] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1545.

[12] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1571.

[13] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1572.

[14] http://www.w2i.org/publications/PoBBWC05/index.html.

[15] http://www.openaccess.uem.mz.

[16] *Open Access for Africa: Challenges, Recommendations and Examples* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 05.II.A.14).

[17] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1536.

[18] http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_id=1837.